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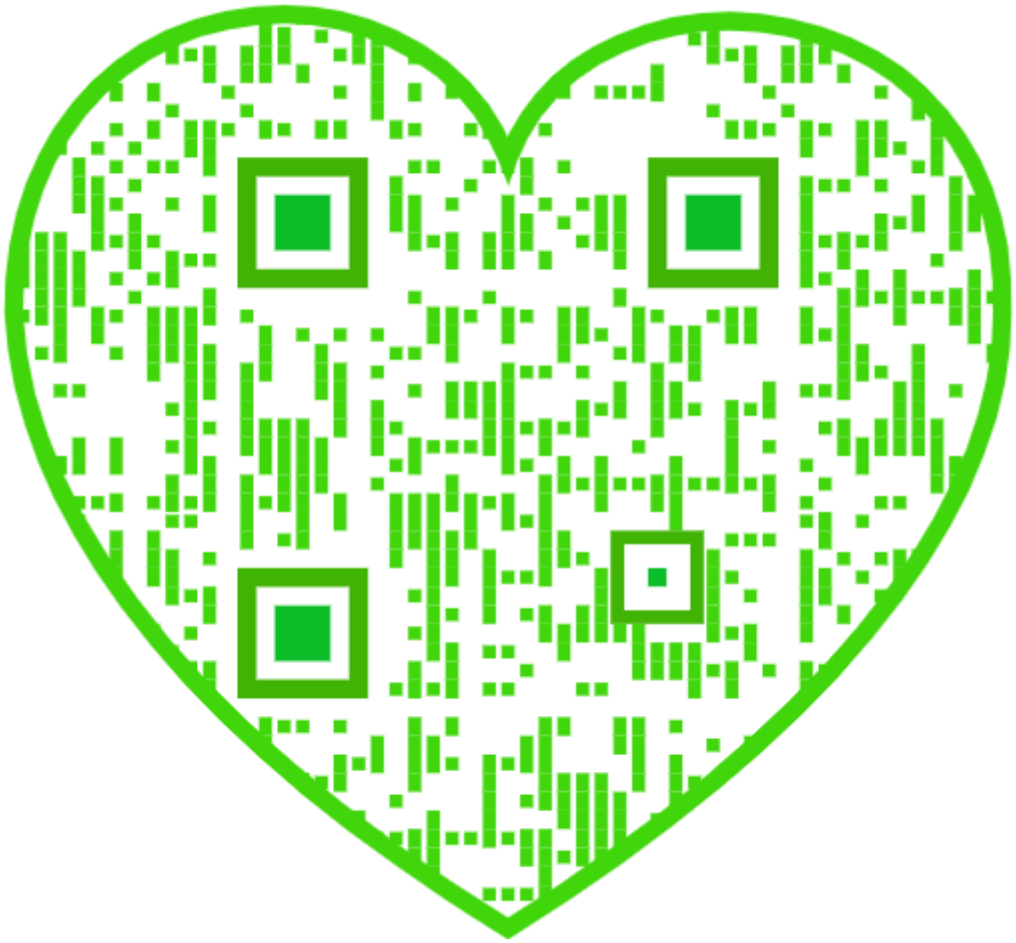
RAFFIA BASKETRY AS AN ART

GERTRUDE AND MILDRED ASHLEY



RAFFIA BASKETRY AS AN ART

JAPANESE LANDSCAPE BASKET

13 inches in diameter, 8 inches high

RAFFIA BASKETRY

AS AN ART

By

GERTRUDE PORTER ASHLEY

&

MILDRED PORTER ASHLEY

With Illustrations from Baskets made by the Authors and Natalie May Ashley

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PART THIRD INCLUDES A COLLECTION OF DESIGNS DRAWN AND DESCRIBED BY G. P. A.

DEERFIELD

PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHORS

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To

NATALIE M. ASHLEY

In loving remembrance of the many happy hours we three have spent weaving our baskets in the "Cubby," while the scent of the flowers comes in at the windows, and the squirrel chatters on the elm bough overhead, this book is affectionately dedicated by the Authors.

410755

PREFACE

IT is the aim of the authors of this book to make it of practical value in developing interest in Raffia Basketry. The directions for making a basket have been arranged in text-book form. In this way it is hoped that the details of the work may be readily mastered.

We wish first to give credit to Mrs. Madeline Yale Wynne, who was the pioneer in Raffia Basketry. Through her great interest in the Annual Exhibitions of the Deerfield Industries, she has been quick to recognize and encourage originality in all branches of our craft work.

We wish also to acknowledge our obligations to Miss Mary E. Allen, for the illustrations. Her untiring efforts for the high ideals for which the Deerfield Industries have stood for so many years, have been an inspiration to those who have carried on the work.

As a fine art, Raffia Basketry has been slow in developing, partly from want of proper material, and partly from lack of opportunity for study. The idea of arranging in concrete form the many details necessary to produce a basket which is worth while, has been suggested by pupils from time to time. The result may be seen in the following chapters. These details, which may seem complicated and perhaps trivial, have grown out of long experience, both in making baskets and in imparting the knowledge of the art to others. The Raffia Basket in its highest development, as to Workmanship, Form, Design and Color, is an impression of true art. This may be obtained through the study of other forms of art, such as Painting, Tapestry, Pottery and the like. Much has been done in copying baskets made by various tribes of Indians. Why

shall not we, who have the advantages of a higher civilization, carry into wider fields the work they so well began? The development of the dye industry reveals new possibilities and colors have been created which have never been named. The study of Japanese prints is of great value. Nature has also done her part, and many a color scheme has been developed from the hills, rivers, clouds and sunsets. She has also provided abundant material with which to work, from her fields and meadows. Shall we not use these opportunities wisely? It is our earnest desire to give some helpful suggestion which prompts us to place these pages before the public, hoping that others may feel such joy in the work, as has been ours. In the words of Carlyle, "Blessed is he that has found his work; let him ask no other blessedness."

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Part First

CHAPTER I

Materials and Tools

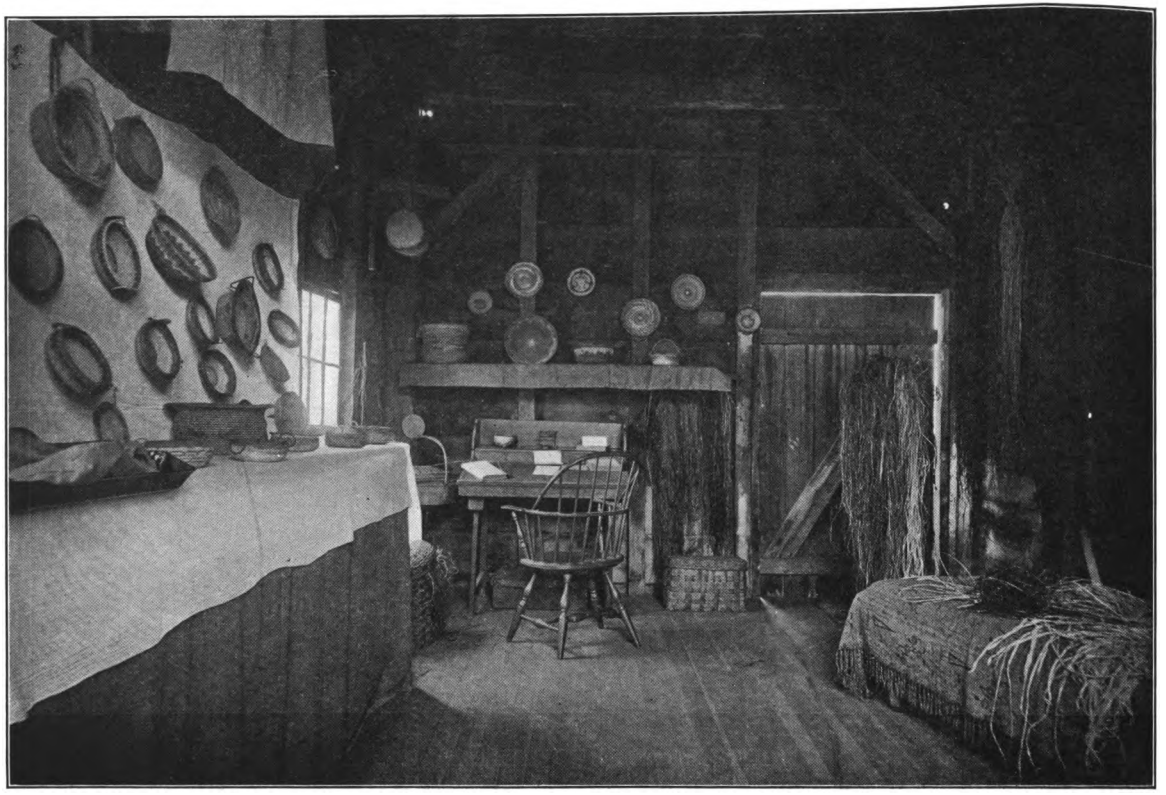
Materials: Raffia and Reeds

Tools: Blunt-pointed carpet-needles, size No. 20; thimble and small scissors.

RAFFIA

RAFFIA is the product of the Raffia palm, which grows in the Island of Madagascar. The outer husks are stripped from the long leaves, and tied in bunches at the stem end. For convenience they are braided into hanks weighing from one to four pounds, and then shipped in bales. Raffia is used by market gardeners and florists for tying vegetables and flowers. The better quality is an ideal material for basket-making. The strands average three feet in length, taper to a point, and are strong and pliable. It lends itself to dyes of every hue, and it is possible to create many new shades.

The color schemes of Raffia Basketry are a fascinating study and are without limit. Great care should be used in the selection of the raffia, as frequently it is stiff, badly torn, or has many blunt ends. Choose the natural color raffia which is soft, long and light-colored, as it grows darker with time. Some of the darker shades, however, of the natural color, serve well as a background, and may even be used for delicate tints, as in cloud effects of a



No. 1. THE "CUBBY" OR STUDIO

Landscape Basket. It may also be used in leading from the natural color to a darker background.

Before using, the natural raffia should be soaked for several hours in clear water. On taking it from the water, it should be laid across a frame or clothes-line, instead of allowing it to hang down. This manner of drying tends to prevent the edge from curling and making a cord. In selecting colored raffia, choose medium shades in permanent dyes. The following suggestions may be useful to a beginner: soft neutral tint of gray or tan; two shades of old rose; blue and green. Many pleasing combinations may be worked out from them. As colored raffia is more expensive it is well to use only a little at first. A basket with a small design in color may be made quite as attractive as one with a large color design, if it is well made.

REEDS

Reeds are also the product of a palm tree which grows to a great height in China and the Philippine Islands. They may be obtained in eight sizes, the most convenient for raffia baskets being Split Reed No. 3 and Round Reeds Nos. 4 and 6. No. 3 is especially well adapted to the beginning of most baskets, as it may be used first single and then double, thus giving the effect of a round reed.

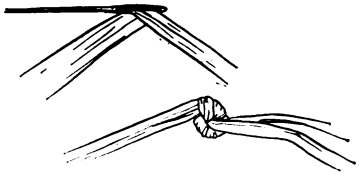
CHAPTER II

The Beginning of a Basket

IF the raffia is inclined to be stiff and dry, as is often the case when kept in a warm room, each strand should be drawn through a damp cloth as used. It must not be too damp, however, as this will cause the raffia to shrink when dry, making the basket less firm.

The width of a strand of raffia should be in proportion to the size of the reed. The ordinary piece of raffia is wide enough for two strands, even after taking off the edge, if curled. No. 3 reed is the size used for all beginnings of baskets, as a larger one is too stiff to use around a small center.

DIRECTIONS



1. Thread the needle at the small end of the raffia, and tie a loose knot about four inches from the stem end.

2. Sew over and over through this ring, working towards the left, carrying the end along, until once around.

3. Do not make the hole too large.

4. Use a long reed, as a single split reed is difficult to join.

5. Moisten the end of the reed.

6. Take the reed in the left hand, flat side down.

7. Place the reed over the small beginning, holding it in place with thumb and finger.

8. Continue sewing over and over, until the reed is fastened in place.

CHAPTER III

The Lazy Squaw Stitch

(*See* A *and* B, *Illustration No. 2.*)

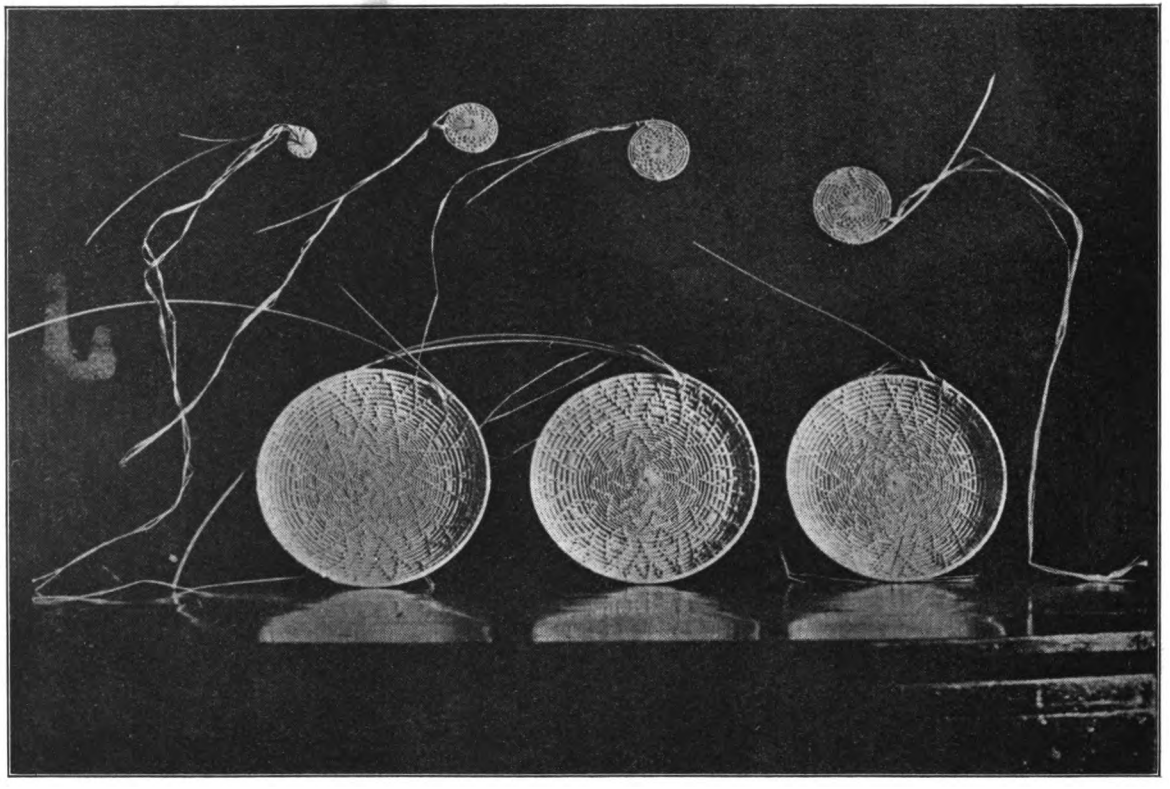
THE pupil is now ready for the stitch known as Lazy Squaw which is made as follows:

1. With the left hand, hold the reed just above the button.
2. With the right hand, wind the raffia once and a half around the reed, holding the raffia near the ring.
3. With the left hand, hold the button between the thumb and fore-finger.
4. Pass the needle through the hole from the under side. This completes the stitch.
5. Before proceeding to the next stitch, give the button a slight turn to the right, to make room for the new stitch.
6. Repeat this stitch until the hole is filled.
7. The raffia must be kept untwisted from the needle, as otherwise it will become frayed.
8. Continue this stitch for several rows, except that, the hole being filled, the needle is now passed through the hole between the stitches.

The following rules are to be observed throughout the entire basket:

(a). Do not split the stitches on either side.
(b). Make all stitches perpendicular to the center, and close together.
(c). Remove all frayed ends and strands, after fastening.
(d). Keep the reed well covered.
(e). Use raffia of uniform width and proper size.
(f). Make the spaces between stitches even.

A B C D



E F G

No. 2. A & B, LAZY SQUAW STITCH C, D, E, F & G, WINDING STITCH

(g). Keep the raffia untwisted.

As the button increases in size, it will be necessary to widen, which may be done in two ways:

(a). Wherever there is space for two stitches in the same hole they should be taken.

(b). If there is too much space for one stitch, and not enough for two, wind the raffia once after taking the stitch.

A new strand may be added in the following way:

(a). Tear the strand the correct width and thread the needle.

(b). Place the strand parallel to the reed, with stem a short distance to the right.

(c). Pass the old strand over the reed as usual, holding it fast between the fingers of the left hand.

(d). Bring the new strand up over the stitch, and pass it through the hole as before.

(e). Take two or three stitches before removing the stem end and the old strand.

CHAPTER IV

The Winding Stitch

(See C, D, E, F *and* G, *Illustration No. 2.)*

THE entire basket may be made of Lazy Squaw stitch, as was done in the early days of Raffia Basketry. If, however, after making a few rows, one wishes a variety, the stitch which naturally follows is the Winding stitch. This is very simple to understand, but more difficult to keep firm and even. An infinite variety of designs may be wrought out from this stitch, and one soon discovers many new figures.

1. Instead of winding as in Lazy Squaw stitch, wind for a distance of one-fourth of an inch (four or five times), and finish as in Lazy Squaw stitch.

2. Continue the Winding stitch for three rows or longer, if the space is not too wide to keep firm.

3. Place the stitch at the left of the stitch in the previous row. If the last stitch should make the design more even by placing it at the right, instead of the left, it may be done.

The spaces are now too wide to continue, and a new design is started, by taking a stitch each side of the one in the previous row. Each row must now of necessity be different.

Complete the design by placing one stitch between the group of two. The design from this point may readily be followed from the carefully prepared illustrations.

Continue the Winding stitch until the figure has developed into a single stitch, as it reaches the point of the diamond.

A NEW REED

A **new** reed may now be introduced, where the new de-

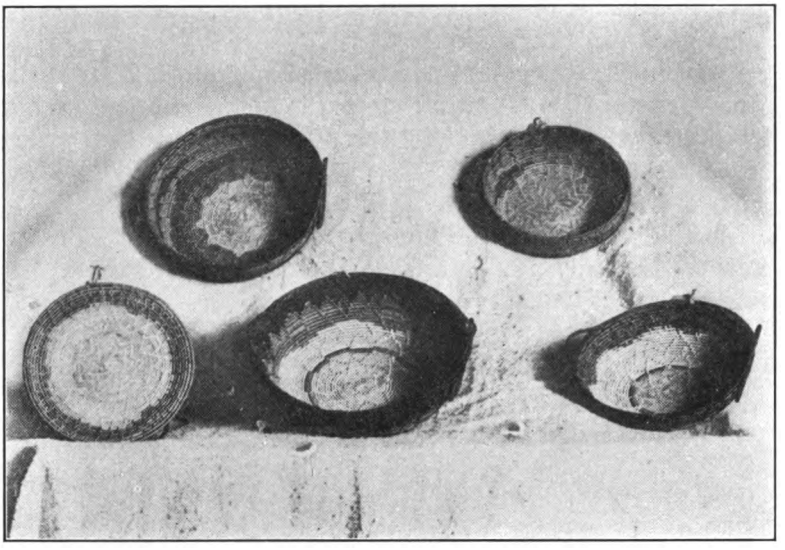
sign is begun. As was elsewhere stated, a single round reed is difficult to join, and this may be avoided by taking a long one in the beginning.

Match the two ends by cutting a long slant, in opposite directions. Use a strand of raffia as a support, while holding the slant ends together. Take a new stitch where necessary, as a support.

DOUBLE REED

A **double** reed is introduced by placing the flat sides together, thus giving the appearance of a round reed. Do not allow the reeds to become twisted.

A B



C D E

No. 3.

CHAPTER V

Block Stitch

(See **E**, *Illustration No. 3.)*

SINGLE BLOCK STITCH

THE single Block stitch is made by binding the raffia over the reed and the last row, between stitches. Bind them over and over neatly until the space is filled. Be sure that the space is covered but do not crowd the raffia. This stitch may be of colored raffia.

DOUBLE BLOCK STITCH

(See D, *Illustration No. 3.)*

This can only be accomplished when the number of points and spaces is even. It is also a good opportunity to introduce two contrasting colors, and makes an attractive finish for the bottom of a basket. A pleasing combination may be made of gray and rose, or blue and green, if they are of the same quality.

Having arrived at the point of the diamond, with winding stitch between, proceed as follows:

1. Thread the needle with gray of proper width, and make a solid block over two rows.
2. The strand of color is introduced in the same manner as the natural color.
3. Bring the gray strand up from the under side, over the reed and under the top row, sewing over and over until the space is filled.
4. Each alternate space is to be made a gray block with Winding stitch of gray between.
5. As the natural raffia is no longer necessary, it may be cut off after the gray has been firmly fastened.
6. The old rose strand is introduced in the next row, and the gray may be discontinued after fastening the rose strand.
7. The block of old rose now alternates with the gray, but instead of winding the reed between the blocks with the rose, the natural colored raffia should be introduced.
8. The strand not in use should be dropped and wound with the reed.
9. Whichever strand is to be used, must be brought up from the under side and wound over the reed.

CHAPTER VI

Turning Up the Basket

(*See* E, F *and* G, *Illustration No. 2.*)

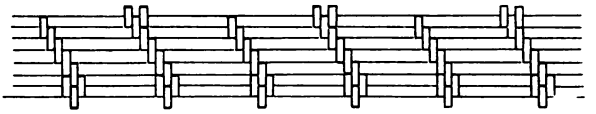
AT this stage of the work the basket may be turned up. A gradual curve is more beautiful than one which is abrupt. The beginning of the curve is so gradual for several rows that it is scarcely perceptible. It is accomplished by slightly raising the reed above the preceding row. It is somewhat difficult to keep the curve the same throughout, but this may be overcome by gently pressing it into shape.

Meanwhile the Winding stitch must be continued from the Block stitch.

The colored raffia is now discontinued, using only the natural strand.

It will be seen that the Block of rose is wider than the gray block, because of being one row higher. From this may be developed a spiral line which is broadened at the top and finished with a point.

THE SPIRAL LINE DESIGN

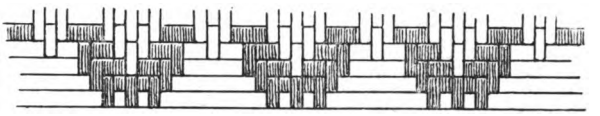


Start the design by placing a stitch at each end of the Block.

1. Make a stitch at the left of the stitch in the previous row.
2. Make three or more rows like the last row.
3. Widen the spiral line just before the close, by making a stitch each side of the one at the end of the line.

4. Complete the line by a stitch between the two, thus forming a point.

DESIGN IN COLOR



Since a long straight row of one color is not desirable, the gray is introduced gradually, by means of three Lazy Squaw stitches placed in groups about an inch apart, with Winding stitch between of natural color.

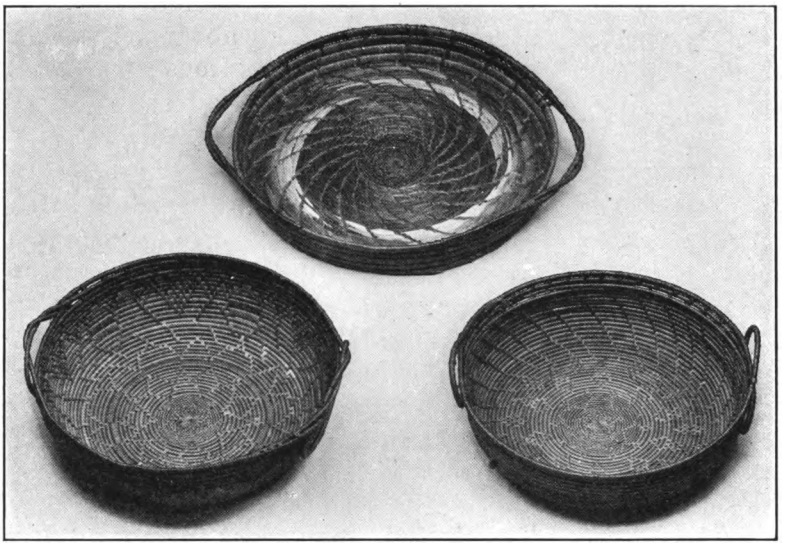
Second row: Gray raffia—a stitch at each end of the design in the row above.

Third row: Gray—a stitch at each end of the design in row before, with one of rose in the middle of each gray design.

Fourth row:—The designs may meet in the third or fourth row. They may be continued in the darker rose color for one row.

The fourth row may be completed as follows: Cut the reed on a slant, and end with one or two Lazy Squaw and then Block stitches on the slant. Fasten the end by concealing it in the row before.

A



B C

No. 4. KNOT STITCH

CHAPTER VII

Knot Stitch

(*See edges of* A, B *and* C, *Illustration No. 4.*)

AS the basket approaches completion, the shape which has up to this time been somewhat flaring, is improved by drawing it in a little. This is done by working from the outside, the reverse of the previous manner.

The stitch often employed in finishing a basket is Knot or Lace stitch, as it is sometimes called, from its more open appearance.

If the basket is to be small, use round reed No. 3. If of medium size, No. 4, and for a large basket, No. 6.

1. Slant the end and begin the row about half an inch to the right of the place where the previous row was finished.

2. Take the first stitch about half an inch from the end of the reed.

3. Pass the needle through from the inside, and carry the end along with the reed.

4. Make half of the Lazy Squaw stitch, after which pass the raffia across the front of the stitch between the rows, and around the right side.

5. Wind to the next stitch, perhaps a quarter of an inch. Continue the row in this manner, until the slant end is reached.

6. Join by holding the slant end close to the reed, and binding smoothly over and over.

The basket may be finished by means of this stitch, but a pleasing variety is made by introducing handles, of which there are many interesting developments.

A

B C

No. 5. HANDLES

CHAPTER VIII

Handles and Finishing the Basket

THE handles for raffia baskets, were, for many years, made separate from the basket and then fastened on. This method was not altogether satisfactory, on account of the difficulty in fastening them neatly and firmly. Since the invention of handles by continuing the reed, these difficulties have been removed. The simplest form of handle may be made as follows:

"THE SUNSET BASKET"

"THE BLUE MOTH" BASKET

HANDLE No. I

(*See* **A**, *Illustration No. 5.*)

1. Dampen the reed.
2. Take three Knot stitches close together, when half way round the row.
3. Wind the reed for about four inches, keeping it well covered.
4. Make an outward curve of about four inches in the widest part.
5. Complete the handle by fastening the reed to the previous row with three Knot stitches.
6. Continue the row of Knot stitch, until nearly opposite the point where the handle was started.
7. Repeat the directions for handles as given above.

FINISHING THE BASKET

1. Slant the reed to match the other end.
2. Make two or three Lazy Squaw stitches.
3. Finish by binding the reeds until completely covered.
4. Fasten the strand by winding it around the nearest knot, and drawing the needle through.
5. When firmly fastened, the raffia may be cut off close.

If these directions are carefully followed, there will be no difficulty in making the handles opposite each other.

CHAPTER IX

Other Varities of Handles

HANDLES with their graceful curves make an attractive finish to a basket. They may be made in endless variety, a few of which will be described in this chapter.

HANDLE No. II—THE PORRINGER HANDLE

(*See* B, *Illustration No. 5.*)

This handle is similar to No. I.

Follow instructions for Handle No. I as far as §4.

1. Make a ring in the widest part of the curve of No. I by crossing the reed and forming a ring.
2. Leave the ring on the outside, or if so desired, it may be curved more and remain on the inside.
3. Fasten the reed where the ring is formed.
4. Wind the reed for the remainder of the handle, and fasten firmly.

HANDLE No. III—THE TWISTED SIDE HANDLE

(*See* C, *Illustration No. 5.*)

Handle No. I may be still further elaborated as follows:

1. Add another row to the basket already described.
2. At the point where the handle is started, the reed is wound as before, and twisted through the handle of the preceding row.

HANDLE No. IV—TWISTED HANDLE No. II

(*See* A, *Illustration No. 4.*)

Two round reeds, one above the other, on the last row of a basket. This when wound gives the appearance of a flat reed.

1. At the point where the handle is to be started, fasten a strand of contrasting color.
2. Wind the reeds separately with the two colors.
3. Twist them loosely together, and fasten at the end of the handle. This style of handle is well adapted for wafer and sandwich trays.

HANDLE No. V—THE LOOP HANDLE

(*See* C, *Illustration No. 4.*)

This handle requires a single round reed.

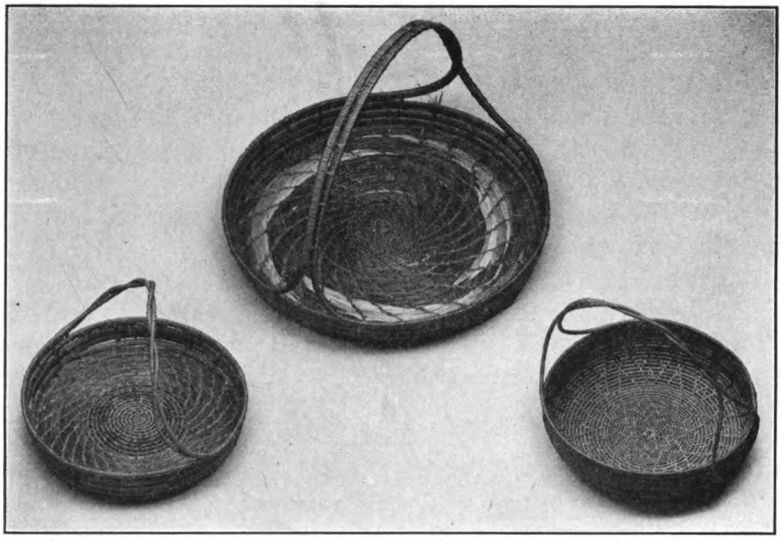
1. Wind the reed as in the previous description.
2. Give the handle a downward curve to the right and bring it up, leaving a space of two inches.
3. Fasten the reed with a Knot stitch to the top row.
4. Continue to wind the reed.
5. Make an upward curve to the left, to correspond with the one below.
6. Finish in the usual way with Knot stitch, over the point where the handle was begun.

HANDLE No. VI—LOOP HANDLE No. II

(*See* B, *Illustration No. 4.*)

This Handle is an elaboration of the Loop Handle, by adding a row and winding it through the loop.

A



B C

No. 6. HANDLES

No. 7. HANDLES

HANDLE No. VII—TWISTED HIGH HANDLE

(*See* A, *Illustration No. 6.*)

1. Wind the reed for the handle sufficiently long to extend over the top of the basket.
2. Join the reed on the opposite side.
3. Continue the row in the opposite direction. (Towards the left.)
4. Continue until near the point where the handle was begun.
5. Join the two handles by Knot stitch.
6. Leave sufficient space on the opposite side to balance the space between the two parts of the handle.

HANDLE No. VIII—TWISTED HIGH HANDLE No. II

(*See* C, *Illustration No. 6.*)

This handle much resembles the preceding design.

In place of joining the reeds over the top by Knot stitch, they may be twisted. This makes a very strong handle.

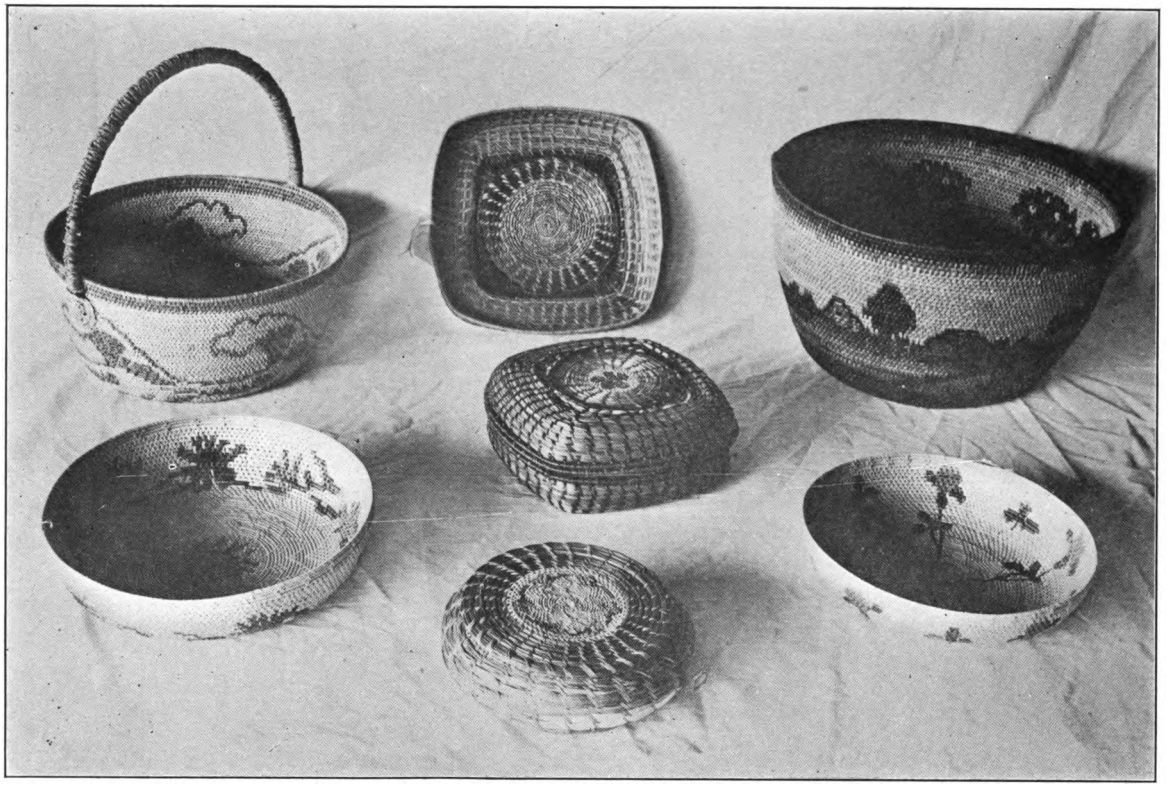
HANDLE No. IX—TWISTED HIGH HANDLE No. III

(*See Illustration No. 7.*)

Wind the reed to extend over the top of the basket.

1. Fasten to the opposite side with Knot stitch.
2. Continue winding, giving the reed a downward curve.
3. Fasten the reed to the lower part of the basket.
4. Wind further, and fasten the reed to the top row.
5. Wind for a long space, twisting the reed several times around the single handle.
6. Fasten the reed to the opposite side and finish.

There are many more varieties of handles, but these may serve to show the manner of their development. The illustrations may suggest other forms of the same idea.



No. 8. DESIGNS FOR BASKETS

CHAPTER X

Suggestions for Designs as Applied to Basketry

AS has before been intimated, the lines of the stitches in Raffia Basketry naturally lead in a diagonal direction, though they may be also horizontal. Taking advantage of this they may be combined in many ways. The following suggestions may be of assistance.

1. These diagonal lines may be adapted to geometrical figures, forming many star and diamond designs. These are often carried out into very elaborate and complicated patterns which may be continued indefinitely.

2. Conventional designs of flowers in Basketry, as in Embroidery, are frequently of great interest.

3. Designs of butterflies, moths or dragon-flies, are well adapted to this purpose.

4. One may find suggestions for designs in visiting Art Museums, and studying designs of Pottery, Tapestries, and Fabrics from foreign lands. The unconscious habit of looking for designs in every line or figure, leads to many ideas.

5. Perhaps the most ambitious design which has yet been attempted is that of the Landscape, of which there are several examples in this book. The following chapter will to some extent explain the details of this variety of design.

NO. 9. THE CHURCH BASKET.

CHAPTER XI

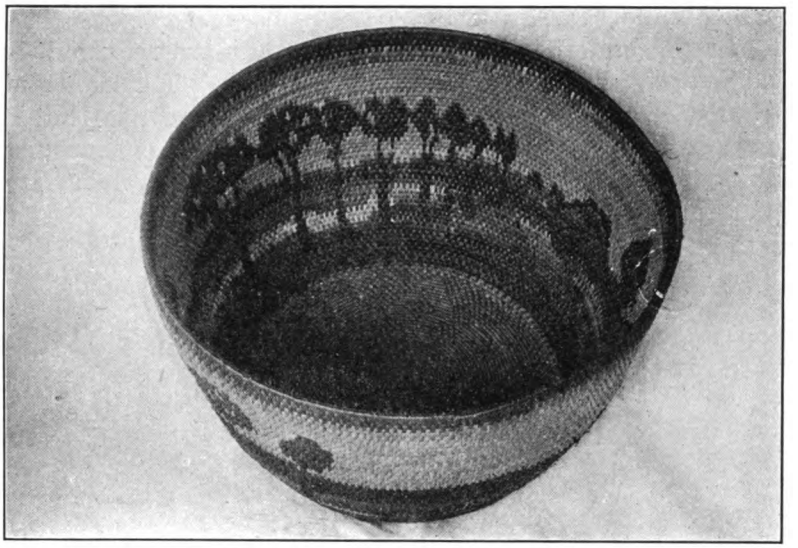
The Landscape Basket

BEFORE attempting a Landscape Basket, the important thing is to decide upon the subject. The average length of a row around a basket sufficiently large for the subject, is at least a yard and a quarter. It requires a series of pictures which must be interesting from every point of view. It requires much study to find pictures which from their nature may be adapted and combined.

This problem solved, the design is sketched in water colors or crayons. It should be simple, with little attention to detail. The bottom may be started with a small reed. After a few rows a larger one may be substituted, followed later by No. 6. The bottom should be large

"DEERFIELD MEADOWS" BASKET

13 inches in diameter, 7 inches high



NO. 10. LANDSCAPE BASKET.

enough to allow the sides to be nearly perpendicular. Any neutral color may be used which harmonizes with the foreground. Either Lazy Squaw or Winding stitch may be used. The size of the strand of raffia must be suited to the size of the reed. As many colors are required for the sides, a smaller reed, No. 4, is used. A larger reed would make the stitch too coarse, as there are many strands carried along with it. The stitch for the sides is usually Lazy Squaw throughout.

The first few rows are very wearisome, as one seems to be accomplishing little. As the basket increases in size, however, the design is more apparent, thus adding to the interest.

As in a painting, the Landscape Basket is best seen at a distance. This adds to the difficulty, and it is only when the work is nearly completed that it has seemed

worthwhile.

As the basket progresses, more colors are required, in some designs as many as eght at one time. This constant changing of strands greatly retards the work, so that it may take four hours to complete one row. A thorough knowledge of the technical part of the work is necessary before undertaking this type of basket.

A STUDY IN LAVENDER AND GREEN

No. 11

THE BITTERSWEET

CHAPTER XII

Form

A BASKET was originally for use, and to this end it should be shaped. A work basket with broad flat base, sides gently curved upward, and of suitable height, is well adapted to serve its purpose.

A work basket to be used for convenience while traveling, has a well-fitted cover. A sandwich tray is broad and has low sides and handles. A scrap-basket must be broad and high.

The shape of basket No. 15 provides a place for spools around the edge. This rather unusual design was copied from an illustration of a Japanese basket, on request. Fanciful shapes, however, are as a rule to be discouraged.

CHAPTER XIII

Color as Applied to Basketry

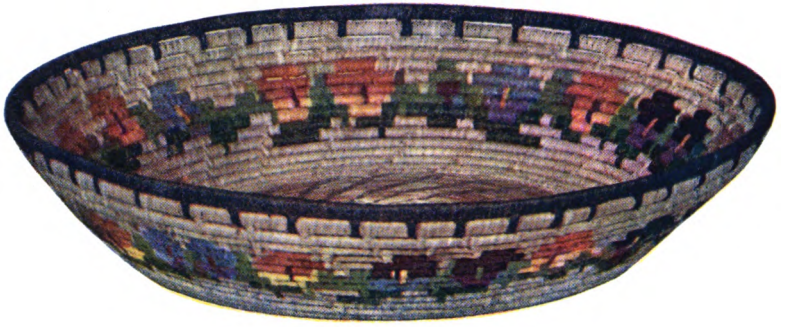
THAT which first attracts attention to an object is color. It is therefore of great importance that the colors be of pleasing quality and permanent. It matters little by what means they are produced, if the result be satisfactory. The natural or vegetable dyes are used by many, but they are perhaps less permanent in some colors than the German dyes.

"How shall we learn to use colors?" pupils sometimes ask, and the reply might be "Turn to Nature." Where shall we find gray in such varied shades as are in clouds and distant mountains: such blues as are in sky and water: such green, brown or russet as are in our meadows? Study the colors in a sunset, and one can scarcely tell where they begin or end. What is seen at one moment has, during the next, entirely disappeared or changed. This is a lesson upon which the greatest master of painting cannot improve. These combinations of color may be used in simple conventional designs or massed in irregular shapes. Many a color scheme has been made from a sunset. The blue and green of ocean waves as they dash against the rocks, reflecting shades of every color, may also serve this purpose.

Interesting color schemes can sometimes be made from flowers. A charming basket was made from the colors of a tulip petal. A wonderful array of colors may often be seen in a vegetable garden. The background may perhaps be a row of waving tassels of corn. The various shades of green, interspersed with the rich wine colors of beets and cabbages, with here and there a bit of the garden path showing, attracts the eye which is trained to

see beauty in even humble surroundings.

The study of color brings much of interest into our lives, and Basketry, as a medium of expression, may be carried to a high degree of development.



"THE PANSY BOWL" BASKET

Part Second

CHAPTER I

The Grass Basket

ANOTHER means of expressing Art in Basketry, through materials which Nature has provided in abundance, and which are furnished for our use, simply by gathering them from our meadows, is that of the Grass Basket.

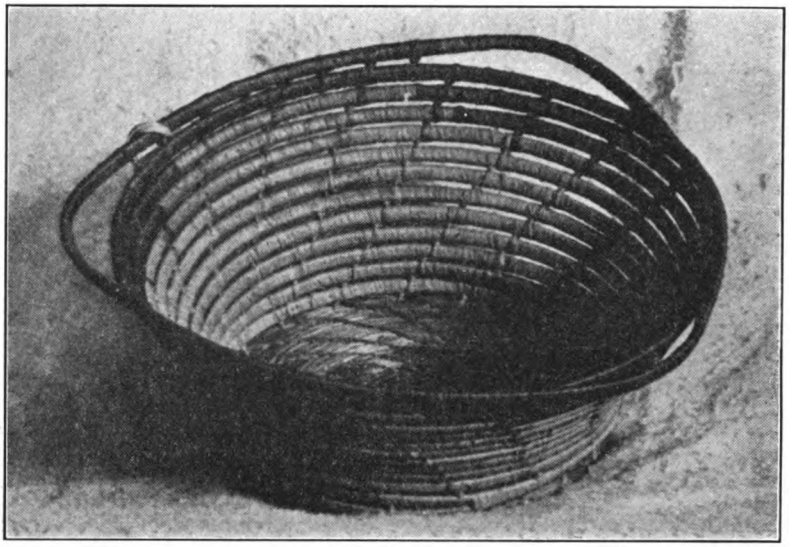
Many experiments have been made in using materials which grow in our neighborhood. Some, however, have proved too fragile for practical use. Those grasses which time has shown to be most serviceable, and at the same time decorative, are Swale Grass, Sweet Vernal, Indian Sweet Grass, Rye-straw, Red-top and Fox-tail.

These may be combined with corn-husks in varying shades of pink and tan. These grasses and corn-husks are used in their natural colors, which they retain for years. It may be said of corn-husks that the colors are permanent.

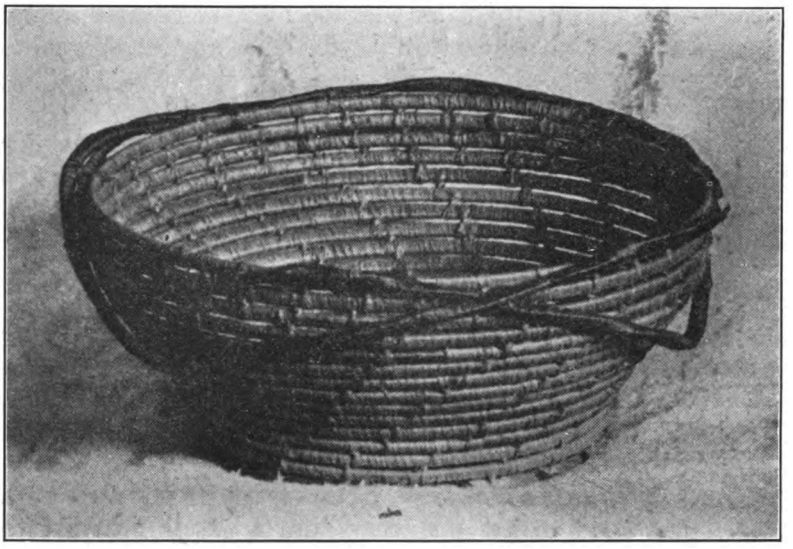
SWALE GRASS

Swale grass grows to a height of four or more feet. The color is a rich green, which when dried in the shade, in the course of time turns to a soft gray. The basket may, however, be made still more attractive by combining the grass with colored designs in raffia.

Swale grass grows in swamps and must be handled with caution, as the edges are very sharp. It is possible to



No. 12. THE GRAY BOWL



No. 13. THE GRAPE VINE

gather it by the middle of May, though it is then rather short. It is at that time, however, of a most brilliant color, and the seed vessels are an added decoration. After cutting a bunch, shake out the dead grass, and spread it in even rows to dry. Turn it each day until dry, when it can be tied in bundles ready for use.

SWEET VERNAL GRASS

We may smell the Sweet Vernal grass in the hayfield, after it is cut, for the time to gather it for fragrance is when the blossom is green. At this time, too, the color is ravishing in its tender silvery green, and may be distinguished by the tuft of blossom at the top of the stalk. It cannot be found by its fragrance, however, as that is perceptible only when cut. Sweet vernal grass is quite short at this season, so it is rather laborious to use, as each tuft must be cut off. This variety of grass may also be gathered later, when dried to a straw color, and it makes a pleasing variety in color, though it has no longer any fragrance.

INDIAN SWEET GRASS

Sweet Grass such as is used by Indian tribes, is desirable both for fragrance and color. It is found in the salt marshes near the coast, and though rather expensive, a little of it goes a good ways. Sweet vernal, red-top and fox-tail consist almost entirely of stems, which woven into the coil of the basket, produce the effect of burnished metal. This in contrast with swale and Indian sweet grass, is very effective.

CORN-HUSKS

October, when the corn is ripe, is the time to haunt the corn-fields. Do not wait for a hard frost, as the juices of the husk are then dried, and the color soon fades. Choose husks in all shades, from white to deepest crimson, and

from tan to deepest brown. The variety of corn seems to make little difference in the color, though the texture of pop-corn may be a little finer. Spread the husks in a dark place to dry. They will at first lose a little of their brilliancy.

CHAPTER II

The Grass and Husk Mat

(*See* A, *Illustration No. 4 — Mat before edge was added.*)

THE center of the mat is more pleasing if made of raffia, with simple design and few colors. A small mat does not need corn-husk, and if it were used, it might result in over-decoration. The mat for this lesson will be sufficiently large to use corn-husk and is made as follows:—

1. Split the raffia as fine as can be used without breaking.
2. Select raffia which is long and strong, and of a good color, as used in the center.
3. With the right side towards the worker, take the first stitch through the edge of the raffia center, just before the end of the reed.
4. Select a bunch of sweet vernal grass, about the size of the reed. Remove any roots or leaves, using only stems.
5. Place the grass over the reed where the first stitch was taken, stem end to right.
6. Bind the second stitch over the grass and reed, about half an inch to the left, and after each stitch hold the raffia firmly between the second and third fingers of the left hand.
7. Pass the needle through every third stitch of the entire row.
8. Complete the row in this manner, holding each stitch fast.
9. Cut the blossoms from the stems where necessary.
10. In the second row, take the first two or three stitches in the same place as in the previous row, in order to tighten them.
11. Take each stitch at the left of the stitch in the

previous row.

12. Keep the coil of equal size, adding more grass wherever necessary, and tuck all ends inside.

13. When the strand must be renewed, repeat the last three stitches, drawing the strand to within a short distance of the end.

14. Do not tie a knot, as these three stitches will hold the work in place. Do not remove the end of the raffia for a few rows, after which it may be cut close to the grass.

15. After a few rows of sweet vernal, the sweet grass may be substituted.

16. Swale grass may be used to make the mat the size desired.

CHAPTER III

The Introduction of the Corn-husk

1. IF the mat is to be nine or more inches in diameter, the husk may be introduced about three inches from the center.

2. Select husks in shades from white to crimson of deepest shade, or from white to deepest brown.

3. Dip the husks in water and roll in a towel.

4. Plan three designs of husks, by dividing the row into three sections.

5. Tear or cut a husk lengthwise, about three-quarters of an inch in width.

6. Fold the edges underneath, slanting the right hand end to a point on the lower edge.

7. Tuck the pointed end out of sight from either side, between the rows, and place it over the grass. Bind it to the previous row at left of the stitch as before.

8. The husk may extend over several stitches, according to the length.

9. Slant the husk at the left end, leaving the point on the upper side which will be covered by the next row.

10. Repeat this process for the three designs.

11. The husk in the next row is started a short distance to the left of the first husk.

12. Make two or three rows of white husk. A light shade of husk is used in the next row, with deeper shades in the following rows.

13. To make the design more effective, two or more rows of the deepest shade are used to balance the white husks.

14. At least five rows of husks are desirable, and more are preferable for a large mat.

15. These designs are improved by making each row of husks somewhat longer, thus giving a swirl effect.

16. After completing the husk design, the mat is finished by two or three rows of swale grass.

17. The husks are to be seen on the right side only, and all ends of grass are to be concealed.

18. A perfect basket must have neatness added to its other qualities necessary for good craftsmanship. They may be summed up as follows: Good Workmanship, Good Form, Good Design, Good Color, and Neatness.

CHAPTER IV

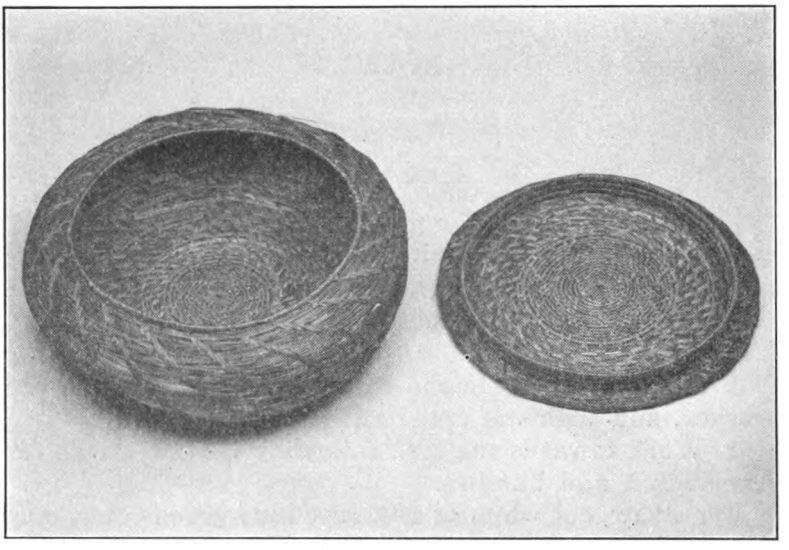
The Grass Tray

(*See* A, *Illustration No. 4.*)

THE grass mat may be made into a tray, if so desired, by making a perpendicular edge of Knot stitch. It may be finished with side or high handles.

1. Place two small round reeds, one above the other.
2. Slant the ends.
3. Bind the reeds to the mat, with edge towards the worker, and with the mat right side up.
4. Work towards the left, following the directions for Knot stitch and handles.

Rye-straw, cut while of that rare blue-green color, may be used, but on account of its stiffness, it is best adapted to large baskets. The following illustrations show three views of a basket made of raffia, grass, and rye-straw.



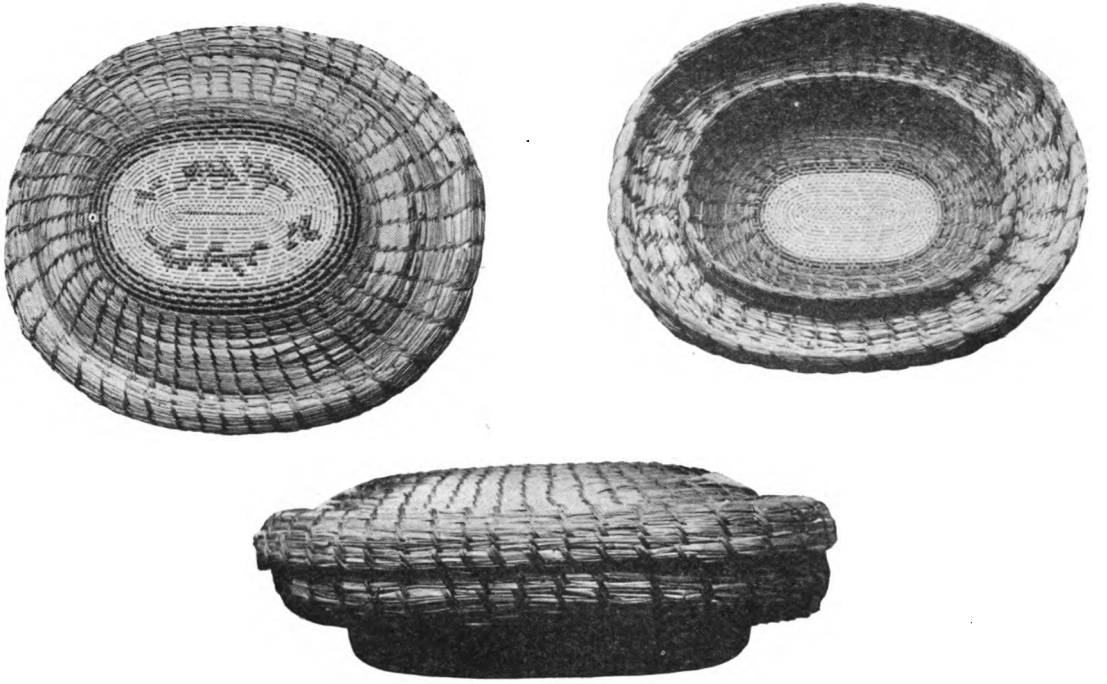
No. 14 THE COVERED GRASS BASKET

CHAPTER V

The Covered Basket

COVERED baskets as a rule are not common in Raffia Basketry. This may be owing to the difficulty in fitting the covers, or because a cover hides much of the design. The basket in the illustration is made of grass and raffia. As there is to be a cover, the raffia center may be all of one color, though of interesting designs in lines and figures. The bottom is three and a half inches in diameter, which includes also the grass.

Follow the directions for making a grass mat. To finish it, continue the stitches when nearly large enough,



No. 15. GRASS WORK-BASKET WITH COVER

without adding more grass, until the grass is all used. The husk designs are placed on the sides in three divisions. In the reverse order, work from the outside.

1. Make the first row or two almost flat, after which, curve gently upward.

2. Start the husk design as soon as the curve is well established, making the sides straight, where the design is widest.

3. Shape the basket constantly with the hands, making each row near the top somewhat smaller, until the opening at the top is a little larger than at the bottom.

4. Finish the top with one row of raffia, removing all loose ends.

THE COVER

The cover is begun like a mat, with a more elaborate design in the raffia center.

1. Bind the grass around until somewhat larger than the opening at the top of the basket.

2. The rim is made on the under side near the edge.

(a). Hold the cover with the reverse side upwards and the edge towards the worker.

(b). Use two round reeds, cut on a slant.

(c). Pass the needle downwards at a point a quarter of an inch from the edge where a stitch was taken before, and return it so that the stitch will be concealed.

(d). Wind the reed on the back side and fasten as before.

(e). After passing halfway around, fit the cover to the basket frequently, and join by binding to the slant end.

(f). Three rows will be sufficient, and if tried on the basket frequently, the result should be a perfect fit.

CHAPTER VI

After-thoughts

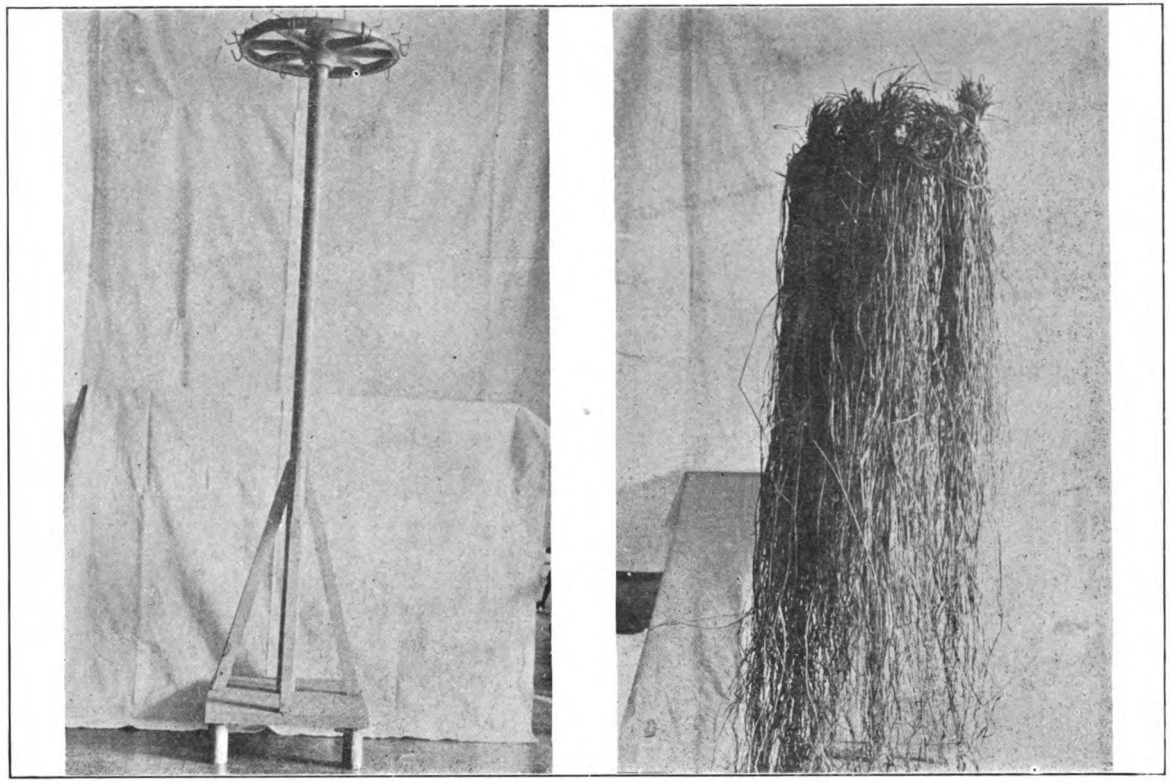
THE somewhat crude device shown in the illustration serves as a convenience upon which to hang the raffia while working, without occupying much space. It consists of a standard attached to a pole about five feet long, upon which revolves a wheel. At the margin of the wheel are placed hooks spaced two inches apart. This serves the same purpose for the worker in Basketry that a pallette does for an artist. The colors to be used may be hung in close proximity, and thus serve the double purpose of studying the harmony of color, and convenience in reaching the raffia.

The illustrations contained in this volume have been selected from a large number of baskets, and may serve to show in some degree the development of Basketry as a Fine Art.

The baskets described in the previous chapters were planned with the idea of teaching all stitches used for practical purposes both in Grass and Raffia Basketry. Each step of the way has been followed while the work was in process of construction.

Other stitches have been used to some extent, but for obvious reasons have been discontinued, except occasionally. Some, while interesting, do not lend themselves readily to design. Others are too slow in their progress, and perhaps too clumsy for a basket of this variety.

Basketry as taught in the public schools, may not arrive to a very high degree of art, as a general rule. It has its value, however, in training both hand and eye in work of this nature, which otherwise might fail to interest them. Pupils may, in this way, learn to discriminate between good and poor craftsmanship—something of Form,

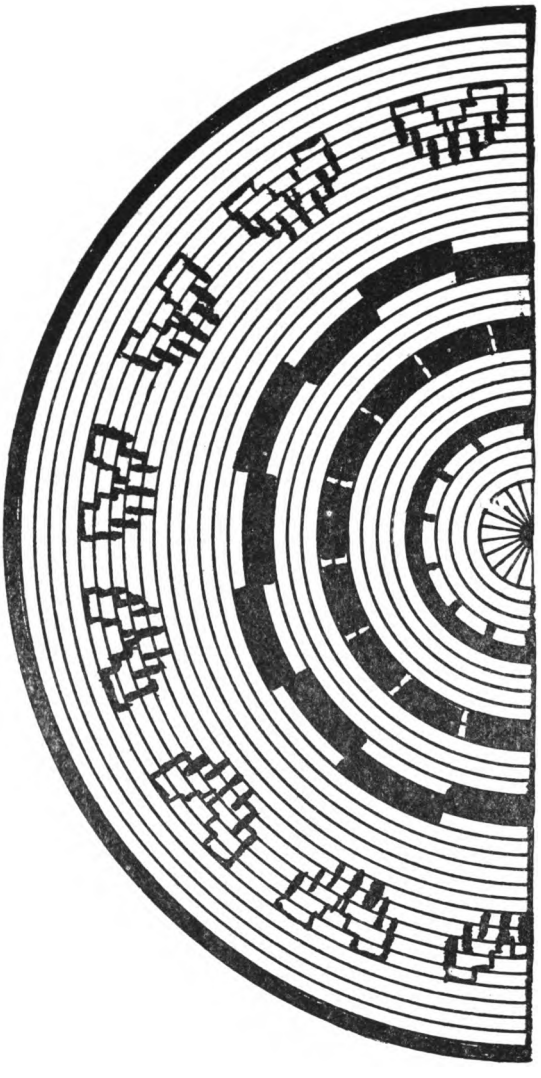


No. 16. FRAME FOR RAFFIA

Design and Color. These, as a refining influence alone, are sufficiently valuable to justify the course of study in our schools. The possibilities of the Raffia Basket are unlimited, as to design and color, and who shall say that it may not find a place among art treasures?

Part Third

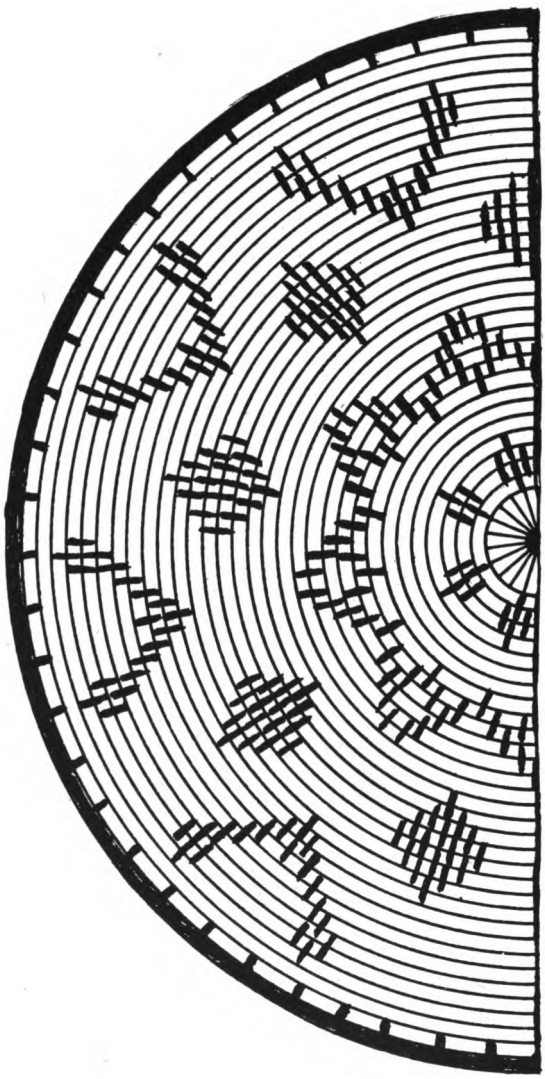
A Stumbling-block frequently encountered by the beginner in raffia basketry is the inability to make a design which is at the same time both simple and pleasing. These free-hand drawings on concentric half-circles are intended to overcome this difficulty, being elementary in character, introducing the simple principles upon which one row leads to the development of the figure in the following row, continuing until the design is completed, and starting at the same time a new design. The general effect of the design may be seen at a glance although a variety of harmonious colors may be used in its development. It is possible to make a variety of baskets from the same design, by changing the color scheme, form, size of reed or the addition of handles, of which there are many varieties.



DETACHED DESIGNS

NO. 1. DETACHED DESIGNS.

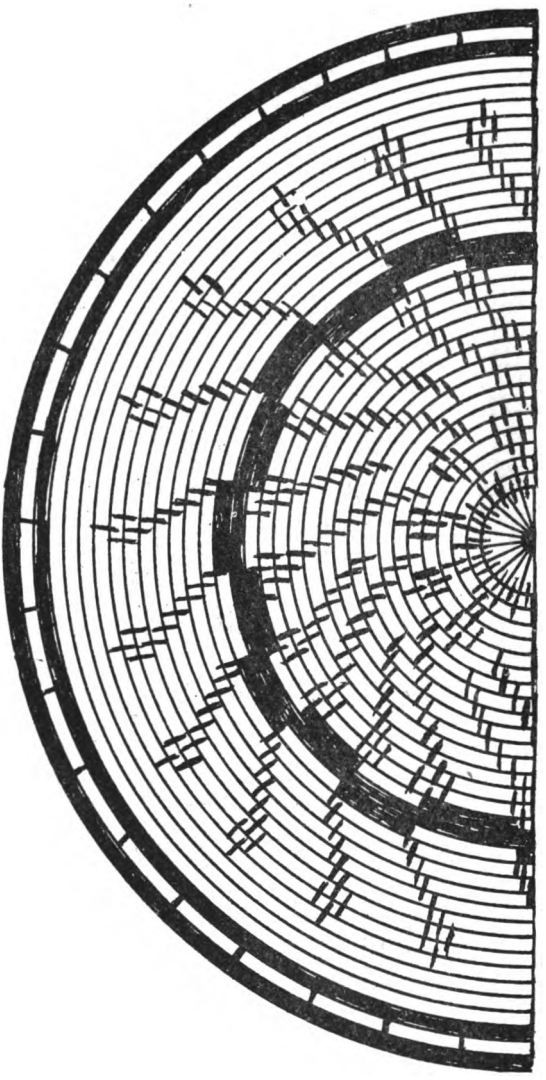
These several figures are entirely separate, each or all of which may be used in one basket, and of one or several colors. Any one of the three lower designs may be used as a finish around the bottom of a basket, the sides making a gradual upward curve from this point. The figures may be in contrasting colors, with a deeper shade on the edge. The heavy, solid lines indicate the single and double block stitch.



DETACHED DESIGNS

NO. 2. DETACHED DESIGNS.

Each of these figures starts with the lazy-squaw stitch, the stitches in the lowest design being about 1-8 of an inch apart, and developing as shown into a very simple figure. The stitches in each figure should be very compact and even, and not too far apart, winding between designs with untwisted thread. Naturally the smaller figures are placed near the center, developing in size as the circles become wider.

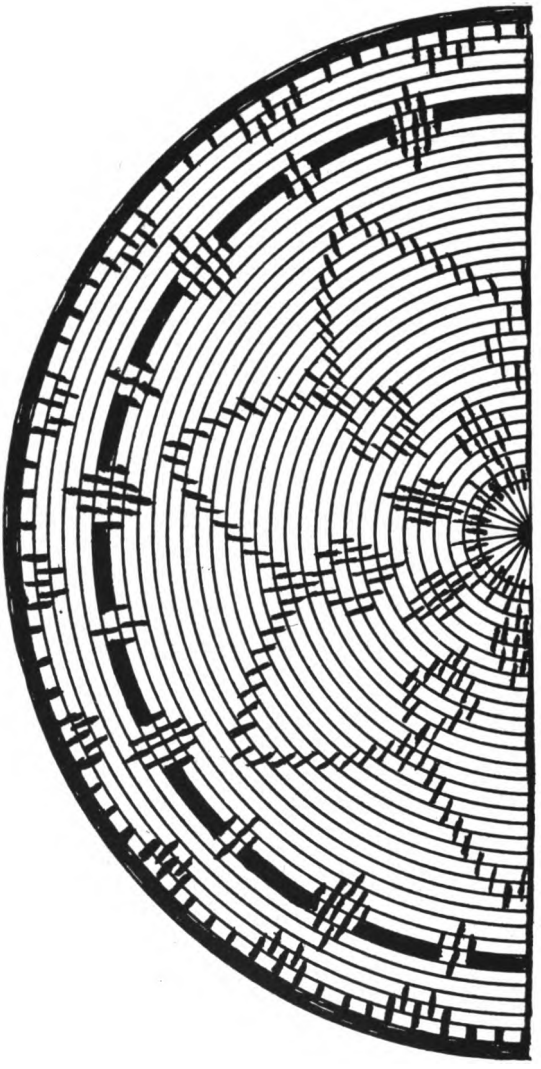


CENTRE IN SPIRAL LINES.

NO. 3. THE MODEL BASKET.

This design has been often used as a model for teaching, because of its simplicity, each new phase of the work being explained as it arises. It is described in the early chapters of this book. These are not detached designs as are Numbers 1 and 2, but each is continued in the row following, until the design is completed. All baskets should be made with at least two rows of lazy-squaw stitch around the center in order to establish a firm foundation. For a beginner it is well to have the background of natural raffia although it may be developed in any neutral shade. To increase the size of the basket, one of the detached designs might be added, as for instance, the upper figure of Number 1, which on Page 13 is shown in two colors, indicated by light and dark tones.

Color suggestions—For the double block stitch use green for the lower and blue for the upper, both of medium shade. The last design may combine these shades. Finish the edge and handles with dark blue, using design like the handles on Page 16, in the "Sunset Basket."

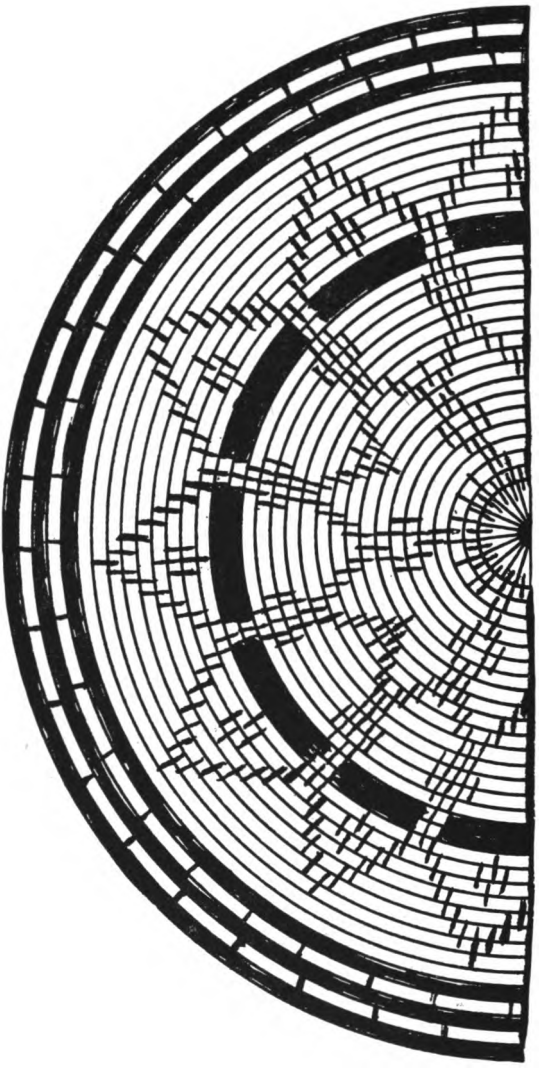


CENTRE AND BORDER.

NO. 4. CONVENTIONAL DESIGN.

This is a typical raffia basket design, the figures being "stars and diamonds" throughout. With harmonious colors and neat workmanship, the result will be quite charming. Should the spaces between points be too wide, they may be filled with more small diamond figures. Finish with "Porringer Handles."

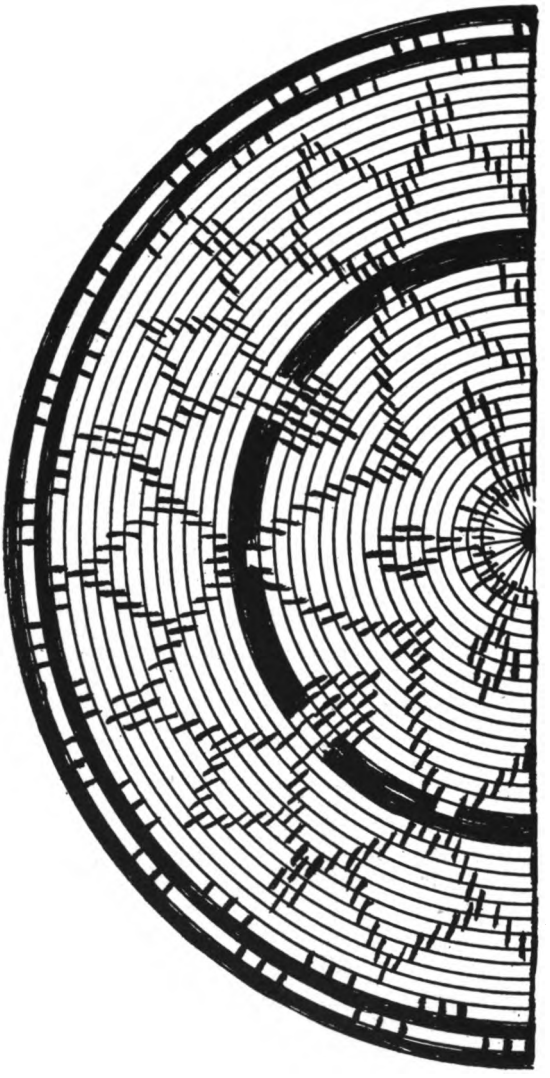
Suggestions for colors—Mauve (within the star); space outside, flesh color; border, large diamond, green, small diamond, orange; band between, mauve; edge, dark red.



CENTRE.

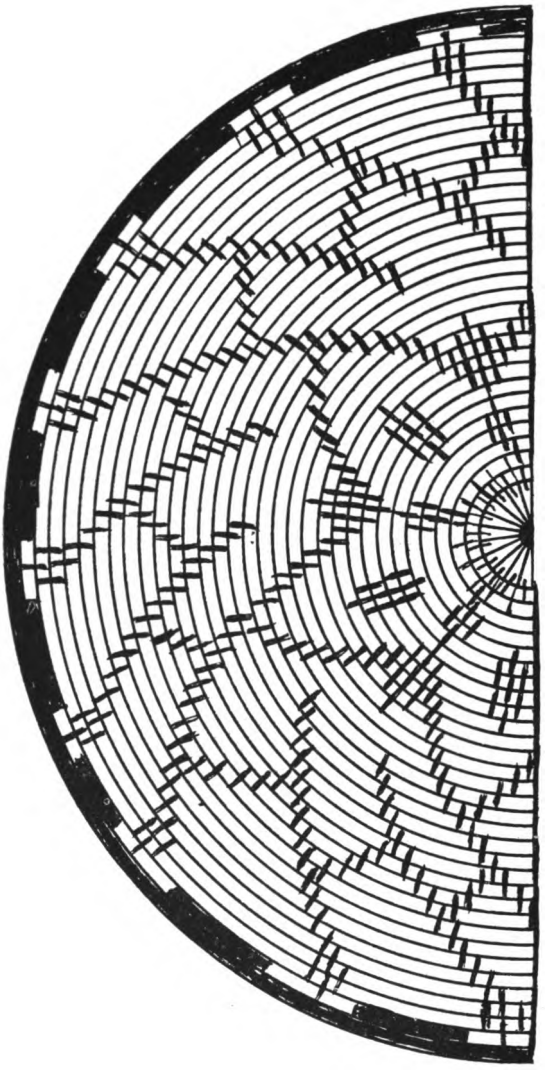
NO. 5. CONVENTIONAL DESIGN.

Another interesting development of lazy-squaw, winding and knot stitches which requires no further explanation.


CENTRE.

NO. 6. CONVENTIONAL DESIGN.

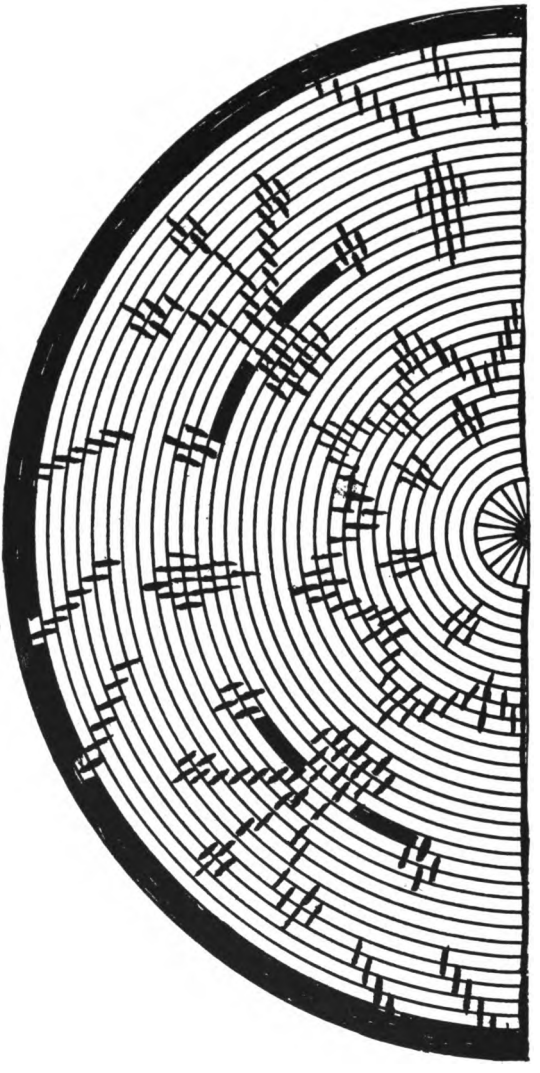
Any of these conventional designs may serve as centers for borders for the designs which follow.



FORGET-ME-NOT DESIGN

NO. 7. CONVENTIONAL DESIGN.

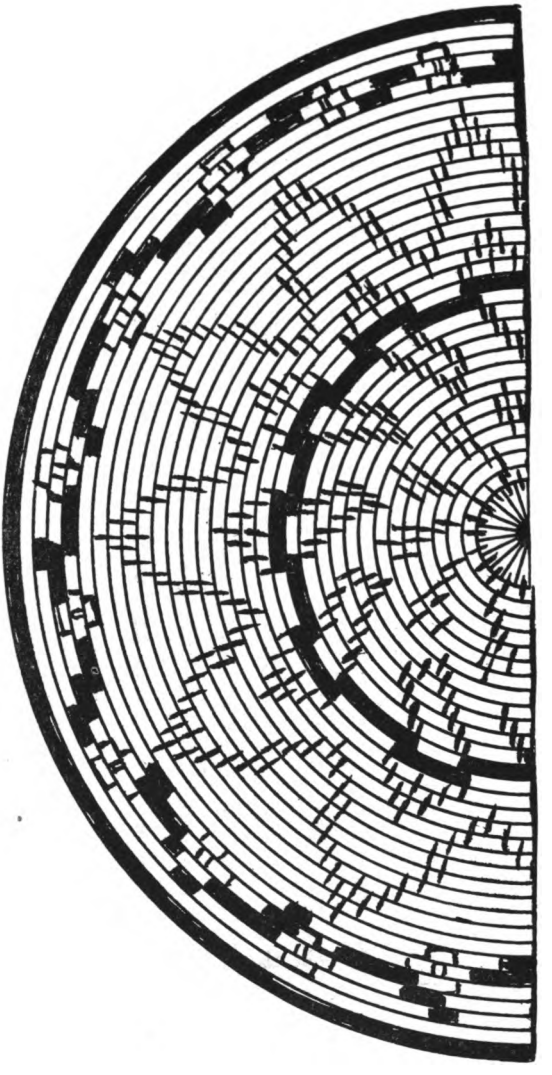
These designs for centers of baskets are more effective as a rule if wrought in one color, thus laying the emphasis on the design of the border. In this way, aside from its being more effective, the interest of the worker is held until the basket is completed.



POPPY DESIGN.

NO. 8. POPPY DESIGN.

The background for this design is dark blue throughout, except in the center, which is light green, then dark green shading into blue. The flower design is introduced by three lazy squaw stitches, as shown in the drawing, foliage and stems of green and flowers of pink. The spiral lines are used to strengthen the sides when necessary. Add side handles like those on Page 16 "B" of dark blue.

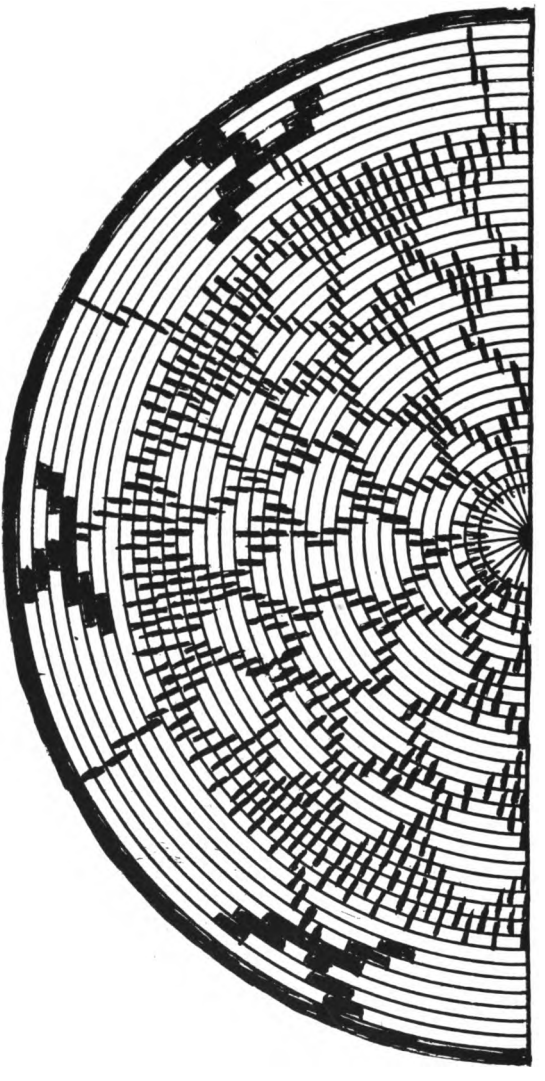


FORGET-ME-NOT.

NO. 9. FORGET-ME-NOT BORDER.

With conventional center. Four rows are required to complete this design, and unless the reed is very fine the flower will be a somewhat large variety.

Colors used are—Medium blue, with a touch of bright orange in center of the flower, made by winding once or twice; foliage of medium shade of green.

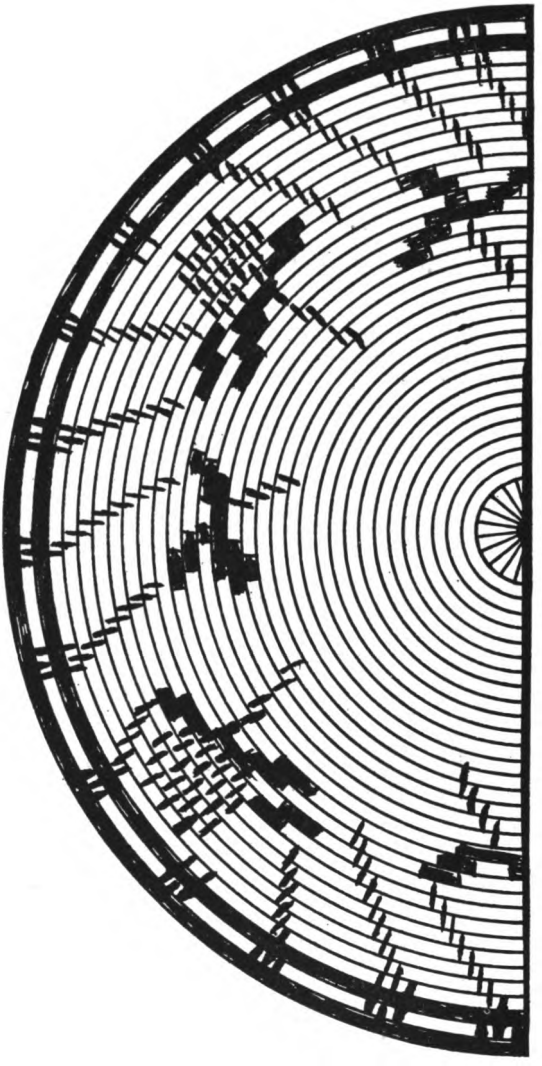


CLOVER CENTRE.

NO. 10. CENTER FOR CLOVER BASKET.

This illustration forms the center and part of the border for a design of red clover blossoms, the latter being shown on the following page. The background is entirely of soft gray tone. Stems and leaves of medium green. The continuous wandering lines which constitute the center might be called the "Tree of Life Design," which starts at the beginning in a single lazy squaw stitch, branching out until it unites with others. Eventually the entire family of stitches meets at the edge of the bottom of the basket.

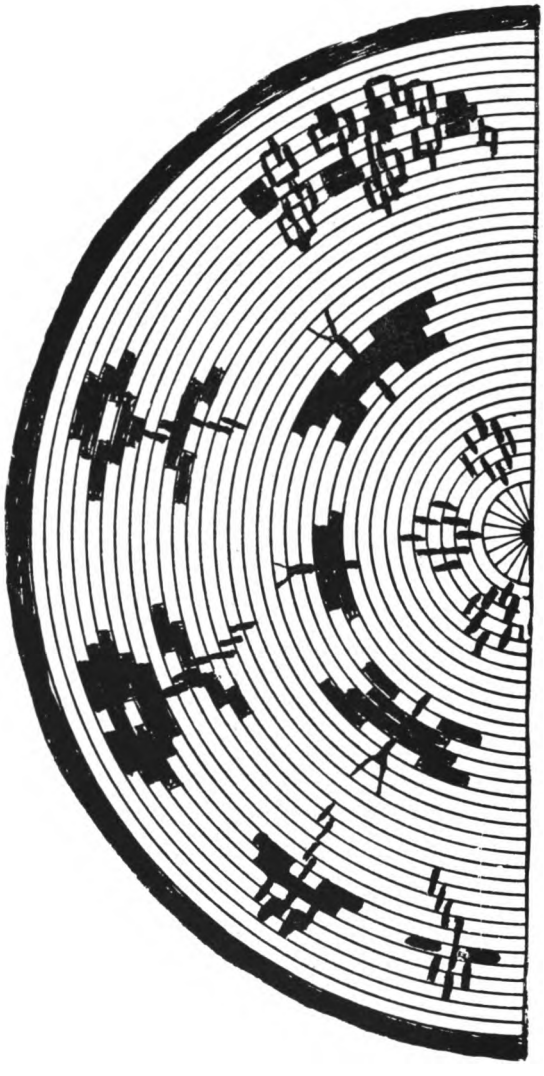
Color for the centre, light gray; foliage of green.



CLOVER BORDER.

NO. 11. CLOVER BLOSSOMS.

The clovers may be entirely of red, but are much more interesting if shaded. No better model for color can be found than a bunch of clovers gathered from the field. This design is especially well adapted for raffia work and it is always a favorite.

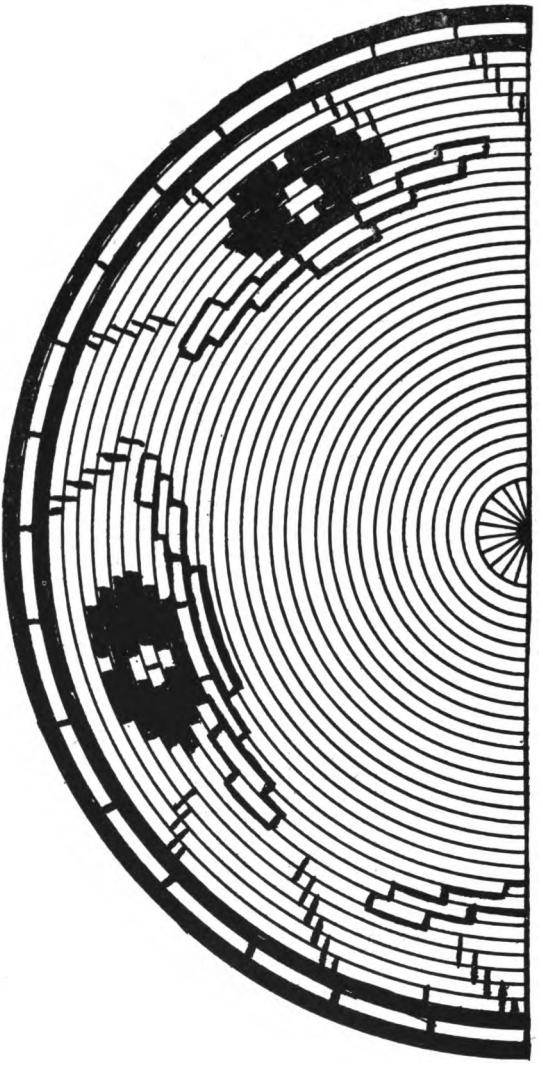


ROSES AND BUTTERFLIES.

NO. 12. ROSE BUDS AND BLOSSOMS, BUTTERFLIES, FLOWER SPRAY, ETC.

These detached designs may be used in connection with any of the center figures illustrated in the previous pages.

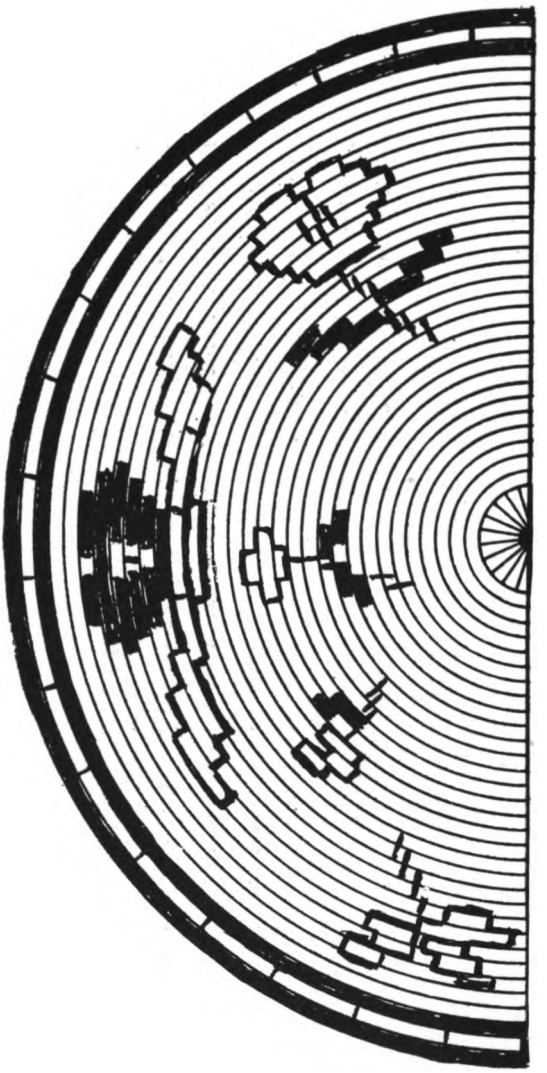
The BUTTERFLY design, like the clover and pansy, is well adapted for long horizontal winding lines, which go to make up the design. The perpendicular lines of the body are no less easily worked out. For the small amount of work required, this design is very effective and popular.



PANSY.

NO. 13. PANSY DESIGN.

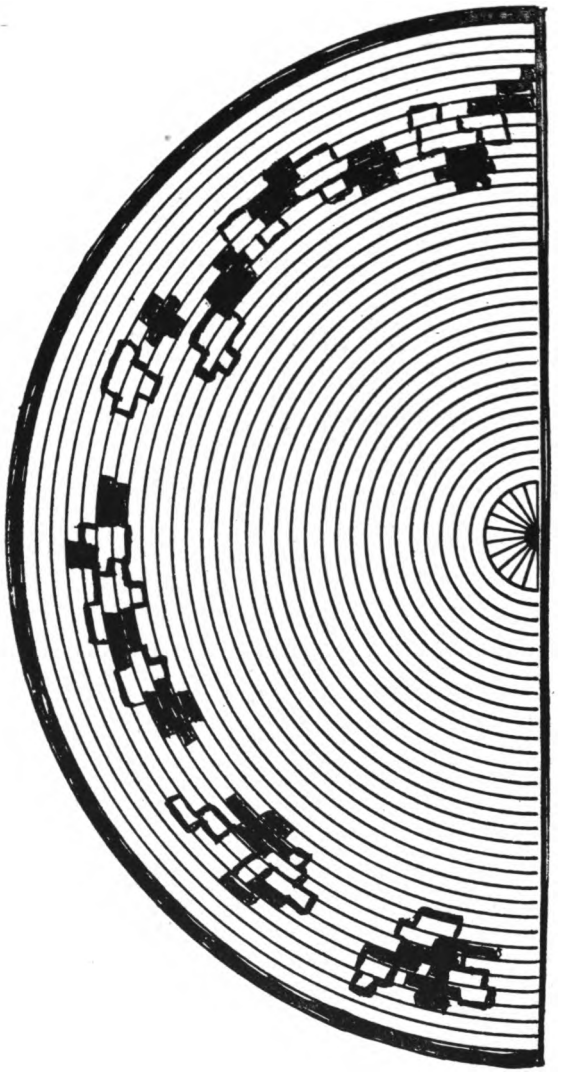
This design may be greatly varied by studying the colors directly from nature, all of which blend with a soft background of gray. This is an attractive design in any form or size of basket, which lends itself to many variations, of which even the most simple has charm. A small tray may have three designs, or five if somewhat larger, each of a different color. The separation in the top line of the design is very necessary to give the pansy effect.



PANSY BUDS AND BLOSSOMS.

NO. 14. DETACHED PANSY BUDS AND BLOSSOMS.

Further development of pansies in leaves and buds. The "Pansy Bowl" illustrated in color on Page 30 shows a more elaborate development of this design, which may be used as a border for a conventional center, in any neutral tone.

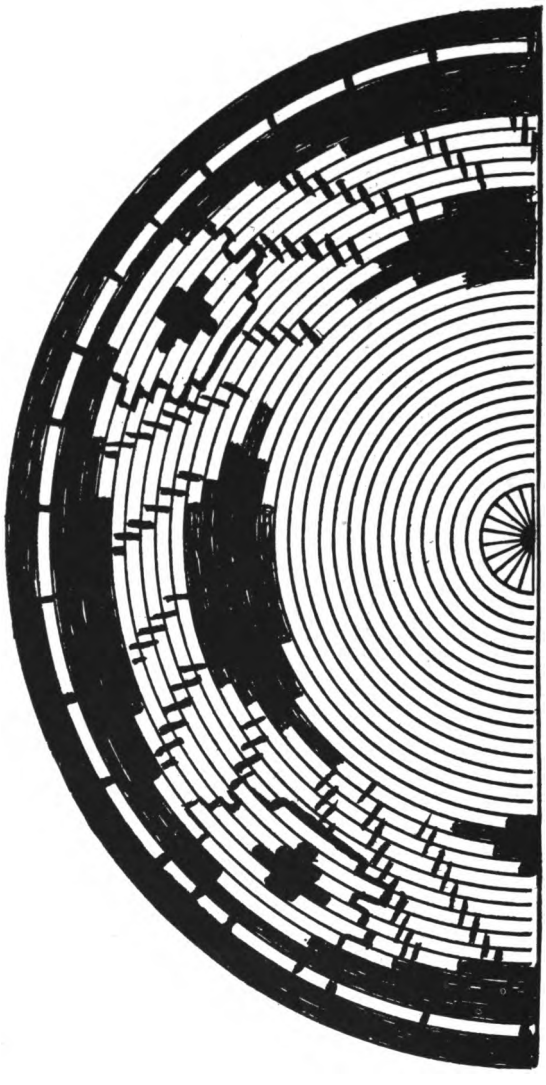


ROSE SPRAYS.

NO. 15. DETACHED SPRAYS OF ROSES.

These detached sprays may be connected if desired, to form a border around the entire basket.

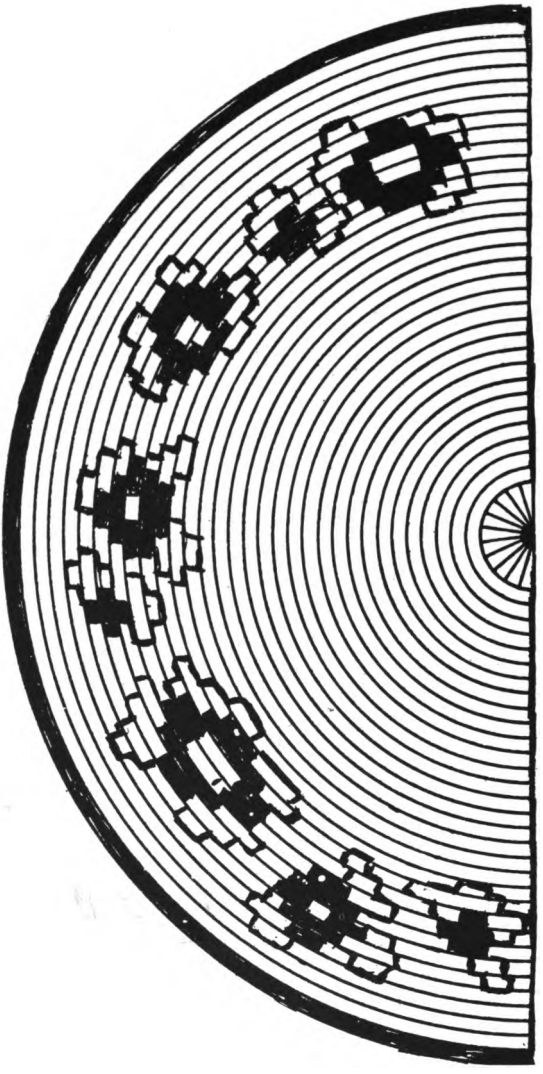
Suggestions for color—Medium green for foliage; vary the roses by using two or three shades of pink; natural or tinted background.



CONVENTIONAL FLOWER, ETC.

NO. 16. CONVENTIONAL FLOWER DESIGN.

Any neutral or natural colored raffia may be used for the bottom and lower part of the sides of this model which extends to the design represented by the dark color. In the original basket this was green, the large space between and that above being a light brown. Into this is introduced a conventional flower design of a dark orange shade, with center of bright orange. Between these floral designs is a brighter shade of green, which in the widest part occupies five rows. The last row is twice the width of the preceding rows, which is accomplished by using two round reeds, one above the other, and wrought in knot stitch. Color Suggestion as follows—Two shades of green, light brown, two shades of orange.



ROSES.

NO. 17. DETACHED FLOWERS.

These detached flowers may be made to suggest roses, in this branch of "Applied Art." The buds and flowers are larger than those shown in No. 15, and very effective if shaded somewhat and applied to baskets of larger size.

Color suggestion:—Two or three shades of pink and the same of green. Background of mauve, or other neutral, use No. 4 reed.

If the worker follows a few of these patterns, she will doubtless soon be able to create original designs, which will add much of interest to the work. Who, having done original work, would be satisfied merely to copy that of others. Raffia basketry places no limit on its possibilities of color arrangement or design. A good design may be used in several combinations of color. Thus there is an endless variety of which the enthusiastic worker never wearies.